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## WHY WOMEN DO NOT WANT THE BALLOT.

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ALBANY.

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WHETHER we like it or not, the question of giving the ballot to women is a question to be faced. From the last Legislature of the State of New York favorable action was secured on the proposal to submit to popular vote the omission of the word "male" from the qualification of voters in the Constitution. This is of course only tentative and preliminary. Another Legislature must pass the law before it can be submitted to the people. But it behooves men and women who are opposed to it to be awake to the duty of hindering its further progress. And it is quite worth while to note how this first step was secured.

The story of the action of the Constitutional Convention upon this subject is familiar. The proposal, backed by monster petitions, was brought to the Convention at a very early day. With praiseworthy and untiring perseverance, its advocates fairly swarmed in the Capitol. Hearing after hearing was given, and the button-holes of members were absolutely worn out by the persistence of personal appeals. The committee to which it was referred was a large, able, and intelligent committee. Hours, both of day and night, were given to the public arguments, including a single hearing (the only one asked for) of the representatives on the other side. And after due and thorough delib-

eration, an adverse report was made by the committee, which was, after full debate, accepted by a large majority vote. It is certainly not too much to say that such a decision, reached after such deliberations, in such a body, has and ought to have the greatest weight.

The opposite result last winter was reached in a very different way. The movement upon the Legislature was cleverly planned, and quietly executed by personal influence and appeal, with no hearing whatever in the Assembly, and with only one hearing in the Senate, held after the whole matter was known to be a foregone conclusion; a sufficient number of votes having been secured by personal pledges to make the passage of the bill sure. This is a well-known method among politicians, which hardly rises to the level of high-minded statesmanship. If it indicates the kind of political manipulation likely to be adopted, in caucuses and at the polls, in popular assemblies and legislative halls, by what is commonly called the "new" woman or the "coming" woman, it will certainly induce most thinking people to feel that "the old is better," and to be thankful that yet awhile, at any rate, the new woman has not *come*. I think I am hardly betraying any confidence in repeating the argument of a famous suffragist leader, tried upon Mr. Choate before his election as President of the Constitutional Convention. "I hear you are to be President of the Constitutional Convention," she said. "Possibly," "If you are, you will have the appointment of committees?" "Undoubtedly." "If you do, I want you to appoint on the committee to consider woman's suffrage, a majority of members known to be in favor of it." "But," he said, "supposing I find in the Convention a large majority opposed to it, could I make up a committee with a majority of its members in favor?" "No" she said: "I suppose you could not, but that is what *we want*." And all through the management of this campaign the appeal has been made, backed often by no other argument than "we want it," to the gallantry of a man towards a woman.

It seems important, in view of the renewed effort in Albany this coming winter, to appeal to the sober-minded thought of men and women; to omit rhetoric, oratory, abuse, misrepresentation, and ask for a serious consideration of a subject, certainly fraught with grave and serious consequences; for anything that touches the ballot touches the foundations of government.

Among the difficulties which beset the whole question now are the indifference and listlessness, or the frivolity and trifling with which in too many instances it is regarded. Many a man says: "Oh! let the experiment be tried; it cannot succeed; it will do no harm to pay women the courtesy of this complimentary vote, and then defeat it at the polls." But this is an experiment too much like playing with fire to be safe. Once granted, it can never be recalled. And the risk of random voting on matters of such importance is too great to be run. Many a woman opposed to the measure feels that the whole thought of signing petitions, and having her name printed, and appealing to the Legislature, is so distasteful to her, that she would prefer to take the chance of probable failure. Meanwhile, the advocates pile up petitions, and multiply unmeaning names. Many a man trifles with his responsibility, under the silly idea that it is ungallant to say "*No*" to a woman. And many a woman laughs at the whole matter as a joke, mixed up with bicycles and bloomers, and a number of other trivial questions which have no remotest relation to the principle involved.

Let us look fairly and squarely at the facts. There is one class of women to be eliminated from the discussion, because they fly into a "frenzy" which is not "fine," mistake abuse for argument, and are only vulgarly violent, with sharp tongues or sharper pens saturated with bitterness and venom. They are, if there were *only* such as these, their own best answerers, furnishing sufficient reason against the movement. There is another class which includes members of both sexes, with whom one cannot deal without sacrificing self-respect or reverence, who revile all that one holds in holiest veneration, Holy Scripture, holy Matrimony, St. Paul, even our dear Lord Himself. How reverent and religious women can cast their lot in with a cause which has this drift in it is inconceivable; and yet some of them do so. One has neither need nor desire to make reply to such as these. They may be safely left, when the sediment has gathered at the bottom, and shows through the quietness of the settled surface, to their own condemnation.

But the cause has among its adherents and advocates a very different class of women and men, to whose sober second thought it is worth while to appeal, and against whose specious but sincere reasonings others need to be warned and guarded. It is

because of these, and of their reasonings, that this paper is written. It is not intended to argue the underlying principles of the case, which have been argued abundantly already, but only to assert them.

1. Suffrage is not a right of anybody. It is a privilege granted by the constitution to such persons as the framers of the constitution and the founders of the government deem best.

2. The old political proverb, "No taxation without representation," is utterly inapplicable to this question. It grew out of the tyrannical action of a government "across the sea," in which no one of all the people on whom the tax was levied had the faintest voice in the framing of the laws or in the choice of the government. We may be said to have in this country a great deal of representation without taxation, because, in thousands of instances, voters, and indeed the very men who impose the tax, own no property at all. But women who are taxed *are* represented by their relatives, by their potent influence, and by men's sense of justice, amounting even to chivalry, which the woman suffragists are doing all they can to destroy, but which has secured to them far more protection, far more independent control of their property, than men have reserved to themselves. The complement and object of taxation is not the right to vote, but the protection of property. And women's property is better protected than men's.

3. Equality does not mean identity of duties, rights, privileges, occupations. The sex differences are proof enough of this. The paths in which men and women are set to walk are parallel, but not the same. And the equilibrium of society cannot be maintained, nor the equipoise of the body, unless this is recognized. As St. Paul put it forcibly long ago: "If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling?" Over-stocked professions, men and women crowding each other in and out of occupation, neglected duties, responsibilities divided until they are destroyed, must be the result if this unnatural idea be enforced.

4. The theory of increased wages for women, to be secured by giving votes to women-workers, is equally preposterous. Wages, like work, are regulated by the unfailing law of supply and demand. Work cannot be created, and wages cannot be forced up. If there are too many workers there will be less employment and lower pay.

These are some of the fundamental and axiomatic truths of the argument.

It is important, too, to guard against the specious method of mixing up things that have no relation to each other. A man or a woman who opposes the forcing of the ballot upon women is classed with the people who dislike female bicyclists and the bloomer costume—questions of taste about which we may differ, but which lie upon the lower plane of æsthetics. The unattractiveness of an ugly dress or an ungraceful movement may repel a man's feelings and lessen the charm of a woman, but there it ends. Women may ride bicycles and wear bloomers without violating any political principle, provided they neither ride *on* the one, nor walk *in* the other, to the polls.

It is still more important to draw another distinction. The slavery of American women exists only in the warped imaginations and heated rhetoric of a few people, who have screamed themselves hoarse upon platforms or written themselves into a rage in newspapers. There is no freer human being on earth to-day, thank God, than the American woman. She has freedom of person, of property, and of profession, absolute and entire. She has all liberty that is not license.

Let a woman tell the facts. I quote from one of Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer's admirable papers in the *New York World*:

"For more than thirty years all the women of New York have been able to enjoy their own property, whether inherited or acquired, without control or interference from any man. A married woman may carry on a trade, business, or profession and keep her earnings for herself alone. She may sue and be sued and make contracts as freely and independently as an unmarried woman or a man. She may sell or transfer her real as well as her personal property just as she chooses. And she is not liable for her husband's debts or obliged to contribute to his support. Meanwhile, a husband is obliged to support his wife and children. He is liable for the price of all 'necessaries' purchased by her, and for money borrowed by her for their purchase; and 'necessaries' are liberally construed as 'commensurate with her husband's means, her wonted living as his spouse, and her station in the community.'

"A man who obtains a divorce cannot ask for alimony; a woman who obtains one is entitled to it, and to continue to receive it even if she remarries. A woman in business cannot be arrested in an action for a debt fraudulently contracted, as a man may be. Every woman enjoys certain exemptions from the sale of her property under execution, but only a man who has and provides for a household or family is exempt in the same way. A woman is entitled to one-third of her husband's real estate at his death, and cannot be deprived of it by will; and no real estate can be sold by him during his lifetime unless she signs off this dower right. A husband's right to a

portion of his wife's property begins only after the birth of a living child, and even then she need not have his consent to sell it during her lifetime, and may deprive him of it altogether by will."

While one "forbears threatenings," it is worth while to wonder whether this would go on if the relations of the sexes to each other were changed. Courtesies that are compelled by law would soon become onerous. Instincts that were required by statute would become irksome, until they were laid aside. A man jostled at the polls and in the primary meetings would be less inclined to step aside or stand up elsewhere to give a woman place.

The almost uniform method of confusing questions, resorted to so constantly in the attacks of the woman suffragists, must be protested against to the end. Giving a woman the ballot has nothing whatever to do with her higher education, with her choice of occupations, with the part she may take in the discussion of public questions, or with her share in the administration of public interests. Along the lines of their distinctive ability, and in the ways of their natural adaptation, no sane man questions the wisdom and the duty of the highest education for women, of the freest following out of their vocations, of the importance of their intelligent knowledge, and the value of their expressed opinions in great moral and social public questions, and of their capacity in certain offices of responsibility, duty and trust.

So far as to principles, and fairness of methods in argument. And now for the appeal to serious men and women, for the serious consideration of this most serious question. The appeal is rightly made, first, in behalf of the women of America who are earnestly opposed to the imposition upon them of a burden which, from their point of view, not only is *not* a duty, but *is* an evil; not only not a right, but actually a wrong. It is very easy, by the process that is sometimes called "counting noses," to say that this is a matter of minorities, and that majorities must rule. But, like many other arguments in favor of this cause, the statement is based upon the "take-things-for-granted" plan. Given a large body of earnest agitators (some of them paid agents who live by the agitation), and everybody knows that numberless signatures may be obtained to a petition for almost anything—names of indifferent, unintelligent, brow-beaten and button-holed people, who sign rather than argue, and assent in the spirit of

lazy complaisance, rather than offend the asker by refusing. Such signatures mean nothing, although they swell the number into a more than millenary petition, and make it more or less miles long. Not for a moment disputing the fact that some of the names stand for intelligence and intention, for conviction and conscience, that they represent education, social position, tax-paying interest, I claim, from my own large and long experience, that, in any community with which I am acquainted, the most serious, intelligent, cultivated women, with the largest money interest in the government, and the most quiet, thoughtful, earnest women, are, conscientiously and on clear convictions, opposed to woman suffrage. I insist that it is a wrong to force such women to the alternative of going to the polls, against their instincts and their convictions, or of allowing the unthinking majority of votes to be enlarged by the ballots of women carried away by a theory, or influenced by a desire for power. What the result would be is matter of conjecture; but my conviction is that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to bring the great mass of really intelligent and responsible women to vote, against their ingrained habits, their instincts, their inclinations, and their judgments. And it is important to stop and consider what that means. The old proverb applies here of the horse dragged to the water, which cannot be made to drink. Legislation may be secured that will say to every woman: "You *shall* have the privilege of voting"; but, after all, it means only "may," and you cannot put the verb into the imperative and say: "You *shall* vote."

There are two factors of grave danger in the political issues and elections of America. First of all, the religious question, which, guard it as we will, crops up from time to time, in appropriations to charities or schools or religious organizations, or in fanatical fury against some form of religious order and belief. There have been two noted instances, at least, in which the danger has been shadowed forth in the arraying of Protestants against Roman Catholics. In one case, the violent stirring up of Protestant women about a school question produced an angry contest, in which the Protestants carried the day; while in the other, after a careful canvass, quietly made among Protestant women, the summons of a single Roman priest mustered a force of female voters, always liable to be controlled by clerical direction, which carried the day for Rome. And the dregs and debris



of the contest were bitter and wretched to a degree. It is to the infinite honor of women that they are more quickly interested, more keenly concerned, and more deeply influenced in their religious feelings and convictions than men. But it adds to the wrong and horror of allowing religion to be dragged into politics, if, on one side or the other, a great body of voters could be wielded by any religious or ecclesiastical influence to decide the question and carry the day.

The other factor, known and read of all men, is the venal voter—the man whose ballot is for sale to the highest bidder. The possession of the ballot has not purified the male voter from the heinous sin of a sold vote. Why should it purify the woman? It is a well-known fact that, in all our large cities, there is a great body of women who sell themselves, soul and body. It is idle to stop and say that men are responsible for this horror. I have no desire to screen men. I believe the man who sins against purity is before God a sinner equally with the woman. But the fact stands that a woman who will sell her purity, her honor, her reputation, herself, will sell anything. And in the city of New York, with its fifty thousand fallen women, there is this enormous and awful possibility of a vote that might turn the tide of any election, purchasable by the highest bidder, who would naturally use his disreputable bargain for disreputable and dangerous ends. By some strange confusion of infantile innocence, unimaginable ignorance of facts, or malicious interpretation of words, men who have called attention to this danger have been accused of insulting their wives and mothers, or of implying that Mrs. Cady Stanton or Miss Anthony would sell her vote. But this sort of answer is only the action of the cuttle-fish which hides its method of escape, or the dust of the fleeing animal which blinds the eyes of its pursuer. The hideous fact of the number of degraded and venal women remains. The awful fact of venal voters among men remains; and of the equally criminal class of political go-betweens, who spend the money of candidates and corporations in these most illegitimate “election expenses.” And the possibility and probability of the increase of a corrupted ballot giving, in a close election, the balance of power, secured by a purchase of the votes of women lost to all sense of shame, follows as an immediate and inevitable danger.

It is constantly urged that women voters would be more con-

scientious and careful than men are, would be always on the side of reform, would advance the interests of temperance and of all great moral and social movements. But, in the first place, this is purely prophetic, without the inspiration of prophecy. It is mere guess-work. To reach a real conclusion through an imaginary premiss is illogical to the last degree. There are, perhaps in smaller proportion, bad women as well as bad men, intemperate women, ignorant women. In the comparisons usually made by the advocates of woman's suffrage, it is always the virtuous and intelligent woman who is contrasted with the ignorant and unprincipled man. The fact is, that to multiply suffrage means to multiply *every kind of vote* by two, and while it would mean an increase of votes cast on principle and for principle, it would also mean an increase of unprincipled votes against the best interests of society. It is greatly to be doubted whether politics, either in its methods or in its results, would be purified in this way. The giving of the ballot to men has not improved either the morals or the responsibility of men. Why should it make women more moral or more responsible? Voting, after all, is to a large degree *by parties and for individuals*, and there is no such violence of partizanship in the world as the violence of female partizanship. No one who has heard a good "Primrose League lady" in England abuse Mr. Gladstone will question this. And the condition of feeling in the South during and since the war is a painful evidence of it. It was the women of the South who fanned the flame of secession, who forced the continuance of the hopeless strife, and who to-day, where there is any spirit of out-and-out sectionalism, are the unrelenting, unforgetting, unforgiving Southerners. This relation of the Southern women to the war is a serious note of warning, in another direction, about "the woman in politics." There can be no doubt that women in the South knew more, thought more, felt more, talked more about politics than the women of the North. And what was the result and effect of their intelligent interest? Slavery and the slave laws, with all their frightful possibilities, maintained in the time of peace, and sectionalism run mad when the opportunity for the war came!

There are two other considerations which cannot be omitted in the study of this subject, the family relation, and the relation between men and women in the world. To-day, in the household, the man is the voter. Suppose the wife becomes a voter

too. She will either reproduce her husband's political views, and there would be in one house *two* Democratic voters, and in another *two* Republican voters, where there had been one. And this is no gain towards a decision of questions. It is only a multiplying of ballots, producing no change of results. Or else the wife would take the opposite side from her husband's, and, instantly, with all the heat and violence of party differences and political disagreements, a bone of contention is introduced into the home; a new cause of dissension and alienation is added to the already strained relations in many families. Then there is the question of mistress and maid. Shall the cook leave her kitchen to cast a vote, which shall counterbalance the vote of the mistress, or shall the employer undertake to control the politics of the "kitchen cabinet"? And all this, not merely on the voting day, or in the deposit of the ballot, but the weeks before and after the election are to be spent in the heat of discussion, or in the smart of defeat. The American home is not too sacred and secure to-day to make it safe to undermine it with the explosive materials of politics and partisanship. And meanwhile, as things are now, the intelligent woman, interested in some great measure of reform, has in her hand, not the ability to rival, offset, or double her husband's vote, but the power of her persuasion, her affection, her ingenuity, to influence it. It would be incredible, if it were not shown to be true, that any large number of thinking and intelligent beings, knowing, feeling, using, this tremendous power, should be willing to run the risk of losing it, by substituting a thing far lower and feebler in its stead. And with the experience of what she has gained for her sex, with the evidence of what voting men have brought about for her under the influence of non-voting women, and through solicitude for their interests, the rashness of this proposed experiment defies description.

It is perfectly idle to imagine that the relation between men and women in the outside world can remain the same when their attitude to each other is so entirely changed. With women mingling in the rough strifes and contests of political life, and assuming positions and duties hitherto unknown to them, there will inevitably come the quenching of that chivalrous feeling of men towards women, born of the protection hitherto expected by women and afforded by men, which is the inspiring cause of so

large a part of the amenities of life and the politeness of manners. And yet, just because woman is physically weak, and man physically strong, there will be no change in the real necessities of things. One may well look with grave anxiety at what is really a *revolution* of the natural order, utterly unable to conjecture what the results may be when women shall have become, not only *votresses*, but *legislatresses*, *mayoresses*, and *alderwomen*. It is the favorite habit of women arguing this cause to deal with it as though woman's suffrage were an *evolution*. But it cannot fairly be considered as, in any way, a progress along the line of that steady advance in the power and position of women, which has been wrought out by Christian civilization. It would not be progress, it would be retrogression. And it is not the least after the manner of growth and improvement in the character, the education, or the opportunities of women. It is a new departure; an entire digression; a violent change, and the appeal of this article is in a way "from Philip drunk to Philip sober." Certain women have said so loudly, and so often, that they are "enslaved," "reduced to a level with idiots," "classed with criminals," "deprived of natural rights," "down-trodden and oppressed," that they have really come to believe it and to make some sensible people believe it. I trust that wiser counsels may in the end prevail. Meanwhile, inasmuch as the active agitators for this radical revolution in the very fundamental elements of government, have resorted to every known means to secure their ends, I cannot but feel, that, however the other women may shrink from the publicity, it is their bounden duty by influence, by argument, by petition, to "fight fire with fire"; to see to it that, in the approaching elections for the Senate and Assembly of the State of New York, men shall be chosen who will defend them from this wrong; and when the elections are completed, to let it be known and felt in Albany that what some women claim as a political right, they consider a personal grievance and a public harm.

WM. CROSWELL DOANE.